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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 000072

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [EUN](#) [PINS](#) [CD](#) [CT](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: CHAD/C.A.R. PKO: FRANCE TO PROVIDE MISSING
ELEMENTS

REF: 07 PARIS 4661

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d
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¶1. (C) SUMMARY: France will provide helicopters and additional troops, heretofore lacking, that will enable the EU-led peacekeeping mission to deploy to Chad and the Central African Republic (C.A.R.), MFA DAS-equivalent Christine Fages informed us on January 10. She said the EU would discuss force-generation issues in Brussels on January 11 and that she expected EU partners would be satisfied with the arrangements and agree to field the mission. She said that force commander General Nash's approval would follow, with an operations plan to be presented on January 18. The force could begin deploying at the beginning of February. Fages also noted French relief that the "Arche de Zoe" child smugglers had been returned to France from Chad but that the case would likely continue to irritate bilateral relations. SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) MFA DAS-equivalent for West Africa Christine Fages on January 10 confirmed press reports indicating that France would provide helicopters and additional troops in order to allow the EU to deploy its peacekeeping mission to Chad and the C.A.R. The operation had been in limbo for several months during which France tried, in vain, to secure commitments from EU partners (and non-EU states as well), mainly in the area of air transportation, medical support facilities, and additional troops. (See reftel for further details.) Fages said that, despite intense lobbying, no further commitments seemed likely and that French President Sarkozy decided to increase France's contribution so that the operation could go forward.

¶3. (C) Fages said that final numbers had not been determined but that France's contribution would consist of "about a dozen" transport helicopters and "several hundred" more troops. (The press has reported a troop contribution ranging from 500 to 800.) She said that France might also provide a small number of fixed-wing aircraft, and she indicated that press reports that Italy would provide a field hospital were correct. Fages said she was hesitant to give precise details before France formally presented its case at the January 11 EU force generation meeting in Brussels.

¶4. (C) Fages said, however, that she expected that European partners would, based on France's additional contributions, agree to deploy the operation. She said that Irish General Nash, commanding the force, would give his assent and that he would present an operations plan to the EU on January 18. Deployment could start at the beginning of February.

¶5. (C) Fages noted that the force would be more "French" than the GOF would have liked but she stressed that it was still a "European" operation, with some 21 European countries participating. Most importantly, the French would comprise only one of the three highly visible combat battalions (the other two being Irish and Polish). When asked if the GOF resented the lack of support from its EU partners, Fages took the high road and said that France was well aware of the resource constraints facing all member states, some of whom were engaged in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, and that transport helicopters were in very short supply worldwide. She refused to criticize, in particular, the UK and Germany, both of which the French had lobbied intensely but without success. "They are the biggest, so naturally we asked them, but we understand their limitations."

¶6. (C) Under the gun for some months, Fages was visibly relieved that the operation was back on track. She said that it was equally important to get UNAMID up and running so that balance would prevail along all sides of the Sudan-Chad-C.A.R. borders.

Arche de Zoe

¶7. (C) Fages was also quite relieved that the six French citizens convicted in Chad of having tried to smuggle over 100 children to France had been repatriated. She noted the legal problems they now face for having allegedly violated French law in trying to bring the children to France. "But that's the Justice Ministry's problem," she said. Fages commented that the sentences they received in Chad seemed unfair -- some, like leader Eric Breteau, deserved harsher

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sentences than did some of the others, who were "mere followers." The French courts did have some leeway in how the Chadian sentences would be executed in France and Fages expected the six to benefit from French provisions for time-off-for-good-behavior that might not exist in Chad.

¶8. (C) Fages said that the case would continue to be an irritant bilaterally. The GOF had already announced that it would not, on behalf of the six, pay the substantial fine the Chadian courts had imposed, on the grounds that the six were personally liable and that the French state was not. "You can be sure the Chadians will make noise about this, particularly since the six have no resources," she said. Although the case would continue to raise problems, Fages said that "these would be nothing compared to what we would face if they remained in Chad." She also noted that the Arche de Zoe case now had far less potential to block or derail the EU PKO for Chad and C.A.R., France's immediate priority for the region.

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